

# NONPROFIT LEADERS GIVE PORTLAND BUSINESSES SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

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Frank So (left) of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon regaled Power Breakfast guests with insights from the nonprofit world. He was joined by Gary Carroll (middle) of Scouting America, Cascade Pacific Council, and Beach Pace of Big Brothers Big Sisters Columbia Northwest. *Photo by Andy Giegerich*

For the PBJ's September Power Breakfast, three nonprofit stars hit the stage for a wide-ranging discussion on, among other topics, how businesses can work with philanthropic partners and social impact groups.

PBJ Publisher and Market President Candace Beeke said she'd assembled the panel to spotlight the difficulty such groups have. The panelists to whom Beeke spoke were:

- Gary Carroll, Scout Executive & CEO of Scouting America, Cascade Pacific Council
- Beach Pace, CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters Columbia Northwest

- Frank So, Executive Director of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

Here's an edited version of what they had to say.

### **On their groups**

**Gary Carroll:** We serve 19 counties in Oregon and Southwest Washington. We offer lots and lots of opportunities for kids to get outdoors, to build character and to have a lot of fun.

**Beach Pace:** We serve 787 kids, but we're very proud of the work that we get to do in serving their families. We help families with housing insecurity, food insecurity. We're helping in a big way on workforce development: The kids that come through our program sign up with us, and for years, they have set appointments with their mentors. ... Seventy-six percent of the kids in the Big Brothers and Sisters program are kids of color. And I have organizations, private organizations, that say, we just can't find different candidates. And I'm like, we're right here. We've been here for a while, for 120 years.

**Frank So:** Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is celebrating its 50th year. We're an organization that brings together faith-based organizations not to evangelize, but to do good work. We've been around for over 100 years as Portland Council churches and Oregon Council churches. We come together not just to support churches in the work that they've been doing for decades, but also the work that lies in front of us. A lot of our work has to do with global Portland metro-based programs. We have programs where we take young people who are leaving the educational system and secondary schools, and we get them graduated, at a 91% success rate, might I add. We also operate the largest food pantry in the state, in the Cully neighborhood.

### **Does the business community do enough for nonprofits?**

**So:** I don't think we're invited enough. Nonprofit social impact organizations are not at the table enough. It's partially why we're here today. There should be a gravitas, there should be a change to understand the work that we do in this part of the larger community. It's like the police. The police aren't separate from the community. The police are part of the community, the work that nonprofits and social impact organizations do is part of the community. The business partners are part of the community. They're not separate. And we tend to put people in categories. ... We are all together in this, and that's the only way we're going to move forward.

... When I hear a CEO on this stage say that her (store damage) is up 300% in one year, and her security costs have gone up 700%, I have to ask, why aren't you calling the social impact organizations that can help prevent what you're seeing on the streets? We cannot just mitigate. We need to be at the table to help solve the problems.

**Carroll:** It's amazing to imagine what we can create if we take the passionate social impact CEOs and organizations and lift them up. We are the organizations that have the time and the talent, the drive and the belief of really making a difference. We're not unlike those that are in the for-profit area: All of our organizations want to be good in our community. Raise your hand if you're an organization that wants to be evil in our community. It just doesn't happen. So with a partnership that is robust, we can actually make things happen.

**Pace:** There are a lot of people who really care, who just don't know how to get involved, or don't think that they have the time to get involved, or don't really know what the resources are required. It's not much. By having more of us involved in doing this work, and it's not doing eight hours a month or anything like that. Even one hour makes a difference. It opens the door.

### **On being different from other leaders**

Carroll: Scouting has gone through a lot in the last 15 years, and I'm so proud of what our organization has done, how it's a clear pathway for someone like me (Carroll is the first openly gay Scout executive in the group's history) to be in this role where that would have been virtually impossible in the past. Our organization is also very reflective of the times that we are in, and so that means that in parts of the country, like here and on the East Coast, we're going to have more of a progressive thought process. I love getting on the phone and talking with my colleagues in Montgomery, Alabama, and in Little Rock about what we're doing and hearing them saying, "Oh, we're not ready for that yet ... but we still have a very, very strong mission and have a passion for getting the work done." We just do it differently.

And I'm deeply proud of the fact that now all genders are welcome, and it's very important to hear not just me but our national CEO say (that), because that would have never been a thing prior to this decade.

### **On their one final wish from businesses:**

**So:** Advocate with us, not just for with us. See us as an extension of what we're doing.

**Pace:** Educate yourselves on what social impact does and involve us.

**Carroll:** My wish for everyone is that your passion for the community, for doing good things in the community, becomes unlocked and heard, and that you're able to find a place where you can really capitalize on that, and for us to be partners in this, so that we can make an impact like has never been seen before.